



## Natural Resource Stewardship Activities Overview

### Introduction

In the broadest sense, all activities that park staff engage in can be regarded as a form of “stewardship” or taking care of park resources and facilities. In the context of this discussion, stewardship activities are those that are specifically related to the protection of park resources.

### Management Needs

As a result of inventory and/or condition and trend studies, park staff members frequently identify problems with park resources. The presence of exotic plants, elevated levels of ozone in the air, and trampling of rare plants are three examples of resource problems at Shenandoah. Park personnel engage in “Stewardship Activities” in an effort to correct these problems. These activities are wide ranging and include things like restoration of species that are rare or non-existent in the park like Peregrine Falcons, removal of exotic plants like Tree of Heaven and Japanese Stiltgrass, and reviews of applications for air pollution emission permits. In other cases, these activities may be focused on re-establishing particular natural processes on the landscape or striving to prevent human-induced alteration of those processes. Natural processes include things like successional change of plants, disturbance stemming from wildland fires or storms and floods, predator and prey relationships, decomposition and nutrient cycling, and weather or climate induced seasonal changes. Perhaps the most easily re-established of those influences is the role of wildland fire.

It is common for park resource managers to be called upon to work in many different disciplines including air and water quality, hazardous materials management, pest management, species restoration, land reclamation, exotic species control, and public health and safety. This is why many resource managers are considered generalists and must be prepared to move from discipline to discipline and to think about environmental problems holistically.

### Current Activities

Stewardship activities that are conducted at Shenandoah are many and varied. Currently we are focused on issues such as deer and bear management particularly related to human interactions, reductions in air pollution emissions, protection of hemlock trees from Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, and restoration of the Hogcamp Branch. Some of these activities are addressed in more detail in Fact Sheets that are specific to the project or activity.

Depending on the scope and complexity of a particular project or program, the park may prepare a management plan that is used to make decisions about how park resources are to be managed and to guide park staff in their actions. Examples of management plans related to park resources are Pest Management Plans (usually written for specific species), the Fire Management Plan, and the Bear Management Plan. Park resource conditions change over time so these and other management plans are often in a state of being revised and rewritten.



*SCA volunteer helping to control non-native plants.*